

## Message Text

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44

ACTION EA-06

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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9533

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 1146

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, BM, CH

SUBJECT: NE WIN STILL UNALARMED ABOUT INDOCHINA IMPACT ON BURMA,  
CONVINCED OF HIS OWN INDISPENSIBILITY, CONFIDENT GUB CAN KEEP  
ON ITS ECONOMIC COURSE

REF: RANGOON 1065

SUMMARY: DEPARTING FRG AMBASSADOR TERFLOTH FOUND NE WIN OPTIM-  
ISTIC AND CONFIDENT ABOUT BURMA'S SECURITY DESPITE INDOCHINA  
EVENTS, IN PART BECAUSE OF THE SUPERIOR FIGHTING QUALITIES OF  
THE BURMA ARMY. NE WIN ALSO SEEMED BULLISH ON HIS OWN POLITICAL  
POSITION AND THE BURMESE ECONOMY. END SUMMARY.

1. DEPARTING FRG AMBASSADOR KLAUS TERFLOTH, IN HIS FAREWELL CALL  
ON NE WIN APRIL 30, FOUND HIM IN MUCH THE SAME OPTIMISTIC MOOD AS  
THAT OBSERVED BY AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR LAURIE TWO WEEKS PREVIOUSLY.  
ASKED WHETHER NE WIN EXHIBITED CONCERN ABOUT BURMA'S SITUATION IN  
THE WAKE OF THE COLLAPSE IN CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM, TERFGETH SAID  
"IF YOU PUT IT IN THAT WAY, THE ANSWER IS NO. INTEREST, YES,  
CONCERN, NO." NE WIN HAD EXPRESSED PESSIMISM ABOUT THE FUTURE OF  
LAOS, SAYING THAT IF LAOS FALLS, THIS WOULD BRING THE CHINESE  
EVEN CLOSER TO BURMA'S DOORSTEP; HOWEVER, HE SAID HE WAS CONFIDENT  
THE GUB ARMY COULD CONTINUE TO COPE WITH ALL THREATS TO BURMA'S  
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SECURITY.

2. THERE ARE ONLY TWO GOOD ARMIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, NE WIN TOLD TERFLOTH, THE BURMESE AND THE NORTH VIETNAMESE. "THE REST ARE MERCENARIES," HE SAID. BOTH THE BURMESE ARMY AND THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ARMY ARE INSPIRED WITH THE WILL TO FIGHT FOR THEIR NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE AND THEIR OWN VALUES. FIGHTING ON ITS OWN SOIL, THE GUB ARMY COULD DEFEAT ANY CHALLENGE. NE WIN OUTLINED FOR TERFLOTH THE GRAND STRATEGY BY WHICH THE GUB (UNDER HIS LEADERSHIP) HAD CLEANED UP THE ARAKAN AREA, WIPING OUT THE PEGU YOMA INSURGENTS, AND NOW AS READY TO "SOLVE THE SHAN STATE PROBLEM ONCE AND FOR ALL."

3. TERFLOTH SAYS HE TRIED TO SUGGEST CAUTIOUSLY THAT NE WIN'S VIEW OF THE SITUATION WAS TOO SIMPLE. "WHAT ABOUT YOUR PROBLEM WITH POLITICAL DISCONTENT?" HE ASKED. NE WIN POOH-POOHED THIS, SAYING THERE IS A TINY MINORITY OF U NU ADHEREMNS, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SMALL CLASS THAT HAD BEEN TURNED OUT OF POWER BY NE WIN'S REVOLUTION, BUT THE REVOLUTION'S GOALS ARE SUPPORTED BY THE GREAT MAJORITY OF BURMA'S PEOPLE. NE WIN ADMITTED THAT THERE WERE ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES, AND COMMENTED HALF RUEFULLY, HALF BOASTFULLY HOW DEPENDENT THE BURMESE ARE ON HIS OWN PERSONAL GUIDANCE IN SOLVING ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. HE MUST SHOW THEM HOW TO GROW NEW RICE STRAINS, HE HAD TO PROVE TO THEM THAT CERTAIN CROPS CAN BE RAISED IN THE SHAN STATE, ETC. TERFLOTH COMMENTED THAT NE WIN WAS EXTRAORDINARILY PATERNALISTIC IN THESE REMARKS.

4. NE WIN'S RESPONSE TO THE SUGGESTION THAT THE PEOPLE MIGHT SHOW MORE INITIATIVE IF GIVEN A FREER HAND WAS: "AH, BUT WITH US FREE ENTERPRISE HAS ALWAYS MEANT ENTERPRISE BY CHINESE AND INDIANS, AND THIS WE REALLY CANNOT TOLERATE." WHEN TERFLOTH POINTED OUT THAT CERTAIN FORMS OF CAREFULLY CONTROLLED FOREIGN INVESTMENT OF THE JOINT VENTURE TYPE MIGHT HELP BURMW DEVELOP AN INDIGENOUS MANAGERIAL CLASS, NE WIN SAID HE WOULD BE WATCHING THE CURRENT OFF-SHORE OIL PROJECTS VERY CAREFULLY TO SEE HOW MUCH KMULD BE DONE WITH CONTROLLED FOREIGN INVESTMENT. IN THE MEANTIME, HE SAID, EVERYTHING WILL BE ALL RIGHT AS LONG AS PEOPLE HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT. AND, IN THAT REGARD, BURMA IS MORE FORTUNATE THAN SOME OF ITS NEIGHBORS.

5. COMMENT: A. TERFLOTH, WHO HAS ALWAYS REGARDED NE WIN AS A CONFIDENTIAL

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RATHER LIMITED MAN, WITH THE PATERNALISTIC MENTALITY OF A GERMAN RURAL MAGISTRATE, WAS IMPRESSED ANEW WITH THAT QUALITY; BUT HE WAS ALSO CONVINCED, HE SAYS, OF NE WIN'S BASIC SINCERITY. NE WIN WAS REALLY CONFIDENT OF THE BURMA ARMY'S SUPERIOR FIGHTING QUALITIES, OF THE BURMESE PEOPLE'S DEVOTION TO HIS OWN PROGRAM, OF HIS OWN INDISPENSIBILITY.

B. TERFLOTH WAS STRUCK BY THE ABSENCE OF ANY ANTI-AMERICAN OVERTONES IN NE WIN'S REMARKS ON INDOCHINA (OR OTHER SUBJECTS),

CONFIRMING TERFLOTH'S EARLIER IMPRESSION THAT NE WIN IS BASICALLY PRO-AMERICAN. NOR DOES NE WIN SEEM A DOGMATIC SOCIALIST; HE MENTIONED THE WORD SOCIALISM ONLY ONCE OR TWICE. FINALLY, TERFLOTH SAID NE WIN DID NOT STRESS THE PRC THREAT, OR REFER TO "BIG BROTHER", AS HE WAS DOING A COUPLE OF MONTHS BACK.

C. REGARDING NE WIN'S LACK OF ALARM ABOUT INDOCHINA, I WOULD JUDGE THIS TO BE HIS REAL ATTITUDE AT THIS TIME, ATTRIBUTABLE IN PART TO CONFIDENCE IN THE GUB ARMY'S FIGHTING QUALITIES, IN PART TO HIS CURRENT OPTIMISTIC READING OF PRC INTENTIONS UNDER THE NEW LEADERSHIP LINEUP, IN PART (I PRESUME) TO HIS LACK OF ANY APPREHENSION THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE WILL START PUMPING SUPPORT IN TO THE BCP. I TEND TO SHARE HIS ESTIMATE OF PRC AND NORTH VIETNAMESE INTENTIONS, BUT IN NE WIN'S HOES WOULD BE SOMEWHAT WORRIED ABOUT THE FLOOD OF CAPTURED AMERICAN ARMS THAT WILL BE COMING ON THE MARKET SOON. DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER U LWIN, ON WHOM TERFLOTH ALSO PAID A FAREWELL CALL, WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMPACT OF INDOCHINA DEVELOPMENTS IN ASIA GENERALLY, AND KOREA IN PARTICULAR, BUT HE DID NOT RELATE HIS CONCERN TO BURMA. OSBORN

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